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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005346

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AC/RSS, EAP/MLS
DOD PASS TO OSD/MISSILE DEFENSE POLICY (JAMISON)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PARM OTRA PREL MARR TH

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR GROMOLL, JAMISON, KANG AND KARTCHNER

REF: STATE 152372

¶1. (U) Post welcomes and grants country clearance to Drs. Robert Gromoll, Eliot Kang, and Kerry Kartchner from the Department of State and Mr. Phil Jamison from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to visit Thailand during the period of August 26 - August 30, 2005, to give Thai MFA and MOD officials a briefing on U.S. missile defense programs and policies in preparation for the U.S./Thai ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) seminar on missile defense.

¶2. (U) Point of contact for the visit/briefing will be Political/Military Officer Mark Lambert (tel: 66-2-205-4729; email: LamberMB@state.gov). Political Officer Colin Crosby remains the primary point of contact for the October 6-7 ARF Missile Defense Conference (tel: 66-2-205-4621; email: CrosbyCT2@state.gov).

¶3. (U) As requested, Embassy has confirmed reservations at the Conrad Bangkok Hotel (87 Wireless Road, Bangkok. tel: 66-2-690-9999; fax 66-2-690-9000). Rooms are at Bangkok per diem rate (\$125/night); taxes and breakfast included. Reservations are confirmed for Dr. Kartchner from August 26-30 (confirmation number 197071); Drs. Gromoll (confirmation number 197070) and Kang (confirmation number 197069) from August 27-30; and Mr. Jamison from August 28-29 (confirmation number 197072).

¶4. (U) Due to limited resources and easy availability of airport transportation, post policy does not allow for airport meet and assist. Thai Airways Limousine Service and American Express Airport Taxi are recommended for persons unfamiliar with Bangkok. These services are located inside the arrival hall, which you enter after clearing customs. The cost of a one-way trip varies from 700 to 1500 baht, depending on the type of vehicle, plus another 70 baht for expressway tolls. Regular taxis are also available and cost approximately 225 baht, not including tolls, and an airport departure surcharge of 50 baht. Currently, the exchange rate is approximately USD 1 = 40 baht.

¶5. (U) Although visas are not required of holders of U.S. tourist passports who plan to stay fewer than 30 days, holders of diplomatic or official passports MUST obtain visas prior to arrival. If a traveler is not a U.S. passport holder, please contact your local Thai Embassy for visa information.

¶6. (U) Thailand has an airport departure tax of 500 baht that must be paid in local currency upon departure.

¶7. (SBU) SECURITY INFORMATION

¶A. (U) MANDATORY PERSONAL SECURITY TRAINING:

(U) All U.S. citizen personnel serving under Chief of Mission authority in a temporary duty status of 30 days or more must complete appropriate overseas personal security training prior to travel (04 State 66580). Employees who have completed the Security Overseas Seminar course at State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) after June 1, 2000 meet this requirement. All other TDYers must either a) complete the approved four-day seminar at FSI entitled "Serving Abroad for Families & Employees (SAFE)" or b) have their agency certify to the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security that the employee has undergone equivalent security training. The contact for this certification is Assistant Director of Training, DS/T, at telephone (703) 205-2617. Country clearance will not be granted for any traveler with planned TDY in excess of 30 days if this information is not stated/certified. POC for additional information is DS(underscore)RSOBangkok@state.gov.

¶B. (U) CRIME:

(U) Crime is generally non-confrontational in nature. Criminal acts are usually crimes of opportunity such as purse-snatchings, thefts of unattended property, and pick-pocketing. Visitors should be especially alert in crowded buses, streets, and markets or while on "tuk-tuks." Visitors should lock valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes not in their hotel rooms.

- (U) Be aware of common scams and frauds (including those

involving credit cards, in particular). Visitors should only use credit cards at well-established and reputable businesses. The drugging and robbing of unwary individuals is common. Various Americans have reported being drugged and robbed or beaten after socializing with strangers in bar areas. The drugs can cause serious temporary memory impairment, unconsciousness, and if overdosed, death. Visitors should not accept free food or drinks from strangers.

- (U) Be wary of common scams for jewelry, suits, silks, gems, or antiquities. There are no Thai government-owned or sponsored gem stores. Some disreputable entertainment venues may charge exorbitant drink prices or cover charges. The sale of counterfeit goods is also rampant in tourist areas. If victimized, seek assistance from Tourist Police by dialing **11155**.

E. (U) TRAFFIC:

(U) The traffic situation in Bangkok can be difficult and dangerous for both pedestrians and vehicle occupants. All visitors should be alert to traffic patterns and unexpected motorcycle drivers. Post recommends that pedestrians use the overhead walkways for crossing busy streets. Visitors are advised that traffic drives on the left-hand side, although there may be a bus lane that flows in the opposite direction.

F. (SBU) TERRORISM:

(SBU) The U.S. Mission in Bangkok currently rates the threat from transnational terrorist groups as high. Despite stepped up RTG efforts to monitor the borders, they remain relatively porous and allow easy illegal access. Transnational terrorist groups, to include Al-Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), have utilized Thailand as a transit point.

- (SBU) The threat from indigenous terrorist groups is currently rated as low. There is no evidence to indicate that indigenous terrorist groups are planning acts against U.S. personnel or facilities. The far south of Thailand has experienced incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence, including incidents attributed to armed local Muslim separatist groups. Although Americans have not been specifically targeted in the past, the indiscriminate nature of past attacks by these groups - including bombings of public places - indicates a potential threat to American citizens.

- (U) The State Department is concerned that there is an increased risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Travelers to Thailand should therefore exercise caution, especially in locations where Westerners congregate, such as clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, tourist areas, and other places frequented by foreigners.

G. (U) OTHER SECURITY TIPS:

(U) Visitors should avoid making any pejorative comments about any members of the Thai royal family or engaging in disrespectful conduct within temples or toward religious objects. Such behavior can result in arrest and/or expulsion from Thailand.

- (U) Precautions should also be taken not to discuss sensitive or classified matters outside secure environments or over unsecured and/or cellular telephones, and to securely safeguard classified or sensitive materials at the Chancery, not at hotels or residences.

- (U) Visitors should also be aware of the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Thailand and the most recent Worldwide Caution Public Announcements, which are available via the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. DOD personnel must review the PACOM Force Protection Levels for Thailand found at <http://131.84.1.218/staff/at/athome.shtml>.

- (U) In essence, visitors to Bangkok must exercise appropriate caution and be alert to their surroundings with regard to their personal security. Suspicious incidents/activities should be reported to RSO Bangkok (tel. 02-205-4000, 24 hrs/day). On behalf of US Embassy Bangkok, we hope you have a safe and pleasant visit.

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